

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising:

a needle cannula having a distal point, a proximal end and further having a shaft with a circumference;

a tip protector having a base, the tip protector defining an opening to receive the needle cannula shaft and the tip protector is slideably mounted thereon;

blocking means coupled to the tip protector for blocking the tip protector opening so as to enclose the distal point of the needle cannula within the tip protector;

a gasket coupled to the tip protector base defining an opening nominally of a size almost identical to the shaft circumference to receive the needle cannula shaft;

impeding means fixedly coupled to the needle cannula shaft at a predetermined location of the shaft and defining a size larger than the shaft circumference and the gasket opening for impeding movement of the tip protector along the needle cannula shaft beyond a pre-determined distance from the needle cannula distal point.

2. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a flash chamber coupled to the needle cannula at the needle cannula proximal end.

3. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the gasket is formed in place at the tip protector base of an adhesive material.

4. (Original) The apparatus of claim 3, wherein the gasket adhesive material is selected from the group consisting of paraffin, polyester and polyamide.

5. (Original) The apparatus of claim 3, wherein the gasket adhesive material is cured by exposure to ultraviolet light.

6. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the blocking means comprises:

    a tab having a length sufficient to block the tip protector opening, the tab pivotably coupled to the tip protector within the tip protector opening and slideably engaging the needle cannula shaft in a first biased position such that upon removal of the needle cannula shaft the tab is free to pivot to a second position extending across the tip protector opening.

7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the impeding means comprises:

    an irregularity in the needle cannula shaft circumference a pre-determined distance from the needle cannula distal point occluding passing of the needle cannula shaft through the gasket opening.

8. (Original) The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the tab is an anti-stick metal tab.

9. (Original) The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the irregularity is a crimp inscribed in the needle cannula shaft.

10. (Original) The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the tip protector further comprises:

a superstructure coupled to the base;

a cylindrical anti-stick metal clip housed within the superstructure defining an opening to receive the needle cannula shaft, the clip housing the tab, the tab disposed within the clip opening such that in its first position the tab is biased against the needle cannula shaft and in its second position the tab pivots to block the clip opening.

11. (Original) The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the tip protector is optically transparent, the cylindrical clip opening is a first opening, and the clip further defines a second opening extending over a portion of the cylindrical circumference exposing a portion of the first opening.

12.-14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising:

a needle cannula having a distal point, a proximal end and further having a shaft with a circumference;

a tip protector having a proximal base with a proximal opening and a distal end defining a distal opening, the needle shaft movable through the proximal and distal openings along a path between a first position with the distal point projecting distally beyond the distal end of the tip

protector and a second position with the distal point proximally behind the distal end in the tip protector;

a member coupled to the tip protector and moveable into the path between the distal point and the distal opening with the needle shaft in the second position so as to block the distal opening; and

a separate gasket coupled to the tip protector base proximal opening and defining a gasket opening nominally of a size almost identical to the shaft circumference and through which the needle shaft is movable between the first and second positions;

an irregularity in the needle cannula shaft circumference a pre-determined distance from the needle cannula distal point and defining a size larger than the shaft circumference and the gasket opening occluding passing of the needle cannula shaft through the gasket opening.

16. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 15, the proximal opening sized to pass the irregularity therethrough.

17. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 15 further comprising a flash chamber coupled to the needle cannula at the need cannula proximal end.

18. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 15, the gasket being a formed in place gasket.

19. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 15, the gasket being comprised of an adhesive material.

20. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the gasket adhesive material is selected from the group consisting of paraffin, polyester and polyamide.

21. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the gasket adhesive material is cured by exposure to ultraviolet light.

22. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 15, the member being pivotably coupled to the tip protector and slideably engaging the needle cannula shaft until the needle shaft is in the second position so as to be out of the path while the needle cannula moves from the first position toward the second position, the member pivoting into the path between the distal point and the distal opening with the needle shaft in the second position.

23. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 15, the irregularity in the needle cannula shaft circumference being a crimp.

24. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 15, the member being an anti-stick metal tab.